

accompanied, like the tax-collectors in Esses, by a judge with a special commission of * Trailbaston,' for the King was well aware that both counties were in a disturbed state. The collectors were forcibly prevented from entering Canterbury, and on June 5 the rebels began to gather from all parts of the county at Dartford.¹ It was afterwards believed by some that there had been indecent conduct on the part of the commissioners in the course of their duty, but the one contemporary who brings this charge² is strongly prejudiced against Leg and his commission. Similar charges lately made by the native press of India, with regard to an unpopular house-to-house visitation, proved on investigation quite unfounded. Small as is the reason for believing the general charge of indecency made against the collectors, there is less for believing the story that Wat Tyler began the rebellion by avenging an insult offered to his daughter. It belongs to a well-known class of fable, of which the tales of Lucretia and Virginia are famous examples. The 'motif' is popular and fascinating, and for that very reason suspicious. There is no mention of the incident in any contemporary authority. It is based on the statement of Stow, the Elizabethan annalist, and he only tells it in connection with a certain John Tyler.³ The story of Wat Tyler's blow has been consecrated by tradition, but it must go the way of William Tell's shot.

Whatever were the exact incidents that brought about the disturbance, the revolt of Dartford soon spread far and wide. Various bodies of men were moving through the district, and to distinguish the identity of each band is impossible. A contingent from the rebellious villages of Essex had crossed the Thames at Erith, just below Woolwich, and were busied in calling the southern counties to support the movement set afoot on the north of the river.⁴ On the 7th, Maidstone was in a state of anarchy. Houses were broken open and property taken by the mob.⁵ Another band containing men from Gravesend attacked [Rochester Castle, eager to release their comrade whom Burley had carried off as his serf,

* ¹ *H. R.*, 511; *Arch. Kent*, iii. 90.
 * See Stow's *Chronicle*.
 * *Anc. Ind.*, 35, skins 7 and 13.

² Knighton, ii. 130.
 * *Cont. Eulog.*, 352.